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PAPERS
IN
COLONIES AND TRADE.

The GOLD MEDAL, being the Premium offered, Class 165, for curing British White Herrings in the Dutch method, was this Session adjudged to FRANCIS FORTUNE, Esq. of Lower Thames Street, from whom the following Communications were received

SIR,

I HAVE taken the liberty to forward to the Society of Arts, &c., two half barrels and two kegs of herrings cured by Dutch prisoners after the Dutch method of cure, and I shall feel myself obliged if you will give me notice of the meeting of the Committee on this business, and I will attend to explain the mode of cure, when I hope I shall be thought worthy of the Gold Medal.

I am, Sir,
Your most obedient servant,
FRANCIS FORTUNE.

*No. 8, Lower Thames-Street,
February 5, 1811,*

To C. TAYLOR, M. D. SEC.

M 3

CERTIFICATE.

CERTIFICATE.

THIS is to certify, that the two half barrels and two kegs of herrings sent to the Society of Arts, &c. are fair samples of four hundred barrels, cured by Dutch prisoners after the Dutch mode this year at Yarmouth and Broadstairs, on account of Mr. Fortune.

J. LEWIS.

THOMAS BOWEN.

Isle of Dogs, Feb. 4th, 1811.

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SIR,

BEING desirous that the greatest degree of publicity should be given to every particular relative to the manner in which the Dutch were used to cure their herrings; and being aware of the extensive circulation of the Transactions of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, &c. I feel anxious that a communication likely to be referred to by so many for information, should be intelligible and satisfactory. Under these impressions, and observing that the Society desire "that papers sent to them should be full, clear, and explicit," rather in the form of essays than of letters, I have stated more than perhaps may appear at first sight absolutely necessary, but I flatter myself not more than may prove really useful.

In the deep sea (which is the principal fishery for herrings) the nets are cast from the busses by sunset, and they drive by them alone expecting the shoals, the approach of which is generally indicated by small quantities of fish; and their arrival by immense flights of sea fowl. The best fishing is

is with the wind off shore, for, when it blows in a contrary direction, the shoals are broken and dispersed, and the fishery is seldom successful while it continues in that point.

Immediately after the nets are hauled in, (which is often performed with considerable difficulty, by means of a windlass when they are full) the crew begin to gyp the fish, that is, to cut out the gill, which is followed by the float or swin, and divide the large jugular or spiral vein with a knife at the same time, endeavouring to waste as little of the blood as possible ;—at this work the men are so expert, that some will gyp fifty in a minute.

Immediately after they are gyped, they are put into barrels, commencing with a layer of salt at the bottom, then a tier of fish, each side by side, back downwards, the tail of one touching the head of the other, next a layer of salt, and so alternately until the barrel is filled :—they are thus left, and the blood which issues from the fish, by dissolving the salt forms a pickle infinitely superior to any other that can be made. The herrings thus drained of their blood occupy less space, and the whole consequently sinks about one-third down the barrel, but this sinking is at an end in about three or four days.

When these operations are being performed, the sea is often running mountains high ; and it is not therefore to be supposed, that the barrels are so well coopered as not sometimes to allow the pickle to leak out ; and in order to preserve the fish from being spoiled, which would otherwise happen in such cases, some of the gills and entrails are always put by in barrels with salt, in the same manner as the herrings, and yield a pickle of the same quality ; with this pickle those barrels which have leaked are replenished, and the fish sustains no injury. Every operation is performed in the shade, into which the fish are immediately conveyed,

veyed on their being hauled on board. Each day's fishing is kept separate with the greatest care. The salt used is mixed, and of three different sorts, viz. English, St. Ubes, and Alicant, and each barrel marked with the date of the month on it on which it was filled.

The advantages of gypping the herrings are, that the blood which issues in consequence of the operation from the fish, yields a natural pickle, and improves the flavour; whereas, if left in the fish, it becomes coagulated at the back-bone, and forms the first cause of decay. The mixture of blood and salt operated upon by the extreme heat of the weather during the summer fisheries, produces a fermentation which nearly parboils the herrings, and removes the coarse and raw flavour so often complained of. The gypping is likewise often performed on shore, observing the same precautions; the only difference is, that they are seldom in that case of so good a colour. Gypped herrings are never of so fine a quality as when kept in their own original pickle; their value consists in their softness and flavour; it is this mode of curing herrings that used to be the pride of the Dutch, and this is the kind which supplied their home consumption, and were so much esteemed by all classes of people in Holland.

In order, as far as it is possible, to give a proof of the correctness of the above assertion, I shall state a fact for the information of the Society. During the last year, I employed a number of Dutch fishermen, prisoners, and others, with Englishmen, in gypping and curing herrings; and at one time, my agent at Yarmouth was offered 4*l.* per barrel for all the herrings he had cured there, by a Dutch captain, in order to their being taken to Holland, while ungyped herrings were worth only 8*s.* per barrel. The herrings

now

now under the consideration of your Society, are part of the quantity for which that offer was made.

Should the Society, after due consideration, think proper to adjudge me their Gold Medal, it will afford me much satisfaction, and convince me that my exertions have, in some degree, been beneficial to the community.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

FRANCIS FORTUNE.

No. 8, Lower Thames Street,
Feb. 26th, 1811.

To C. TAYLOR, M. D. SEC.

The SILVER MEDAL of the Society was this Session voted to Mr. PETER SLEAVIN, No. 7, Little Brook-Street, Hampstead Road, for Curing British White Herrings. The following Communications were received from him.

SIR,

I WILL thank you if you will have the goodness to lay before the Society, the sample I have sent of British Herrings cured by me in the Isle of Mann, as I have no doubt they are equal to the Dutch, or better, which I will explain if

if permitted to attend the Committee to whose consideration it may be referred.

The quantity I have cured, is only eight barrels of thirty-two gallons each; I therefore cannot claim under the precise form of the premiums offered by the Society, but if honoured with their notice, I will furnish you with further particulars on the subject.

I am, Sir,
Your very obliged humble servant,

PETER SLEAVIN.

No. 7, Little Brook-Street, Hampstead Road,
Dec. 4th, 1810.

To C. TAYLOR, M.D. SEC.

CERTIFICATE.

By a letter from Mr. JOHN HEAD, to Mr. Sleavin, dated Douglas, Isle of Mann, Dec. 31st, 1810, it appears, that eight barrels of pickled herrings prepared by Mr. Sleavin, were shipped from thence.

Mr. Stearin's Method of Curing Herrings.

WHEN the herrings are taken and alive, break their gills with your finger and thumb completely from the backbone, which will in course cause the fish to bleed: then throw them into the liquor prepared as follows: viz. to three quarts of salt water, put five pounds of common salt, and two

two pounds of bay salt, and when dissolved, let the whole be boiled. One peck of common salt, and half a peck of bay salt, put between the different layers of herrings, will be sufficient for one barrel. Let the herrings remain in this liquor for three weeks, they must then be taken out and gyped, and a fresh liquor made with one gallon of salt water, the gypping of the fish, one peck of common salt, and a quarter of a peck of bay salt, and when dissolved, some of the spare fish must be put in it to make the liquor rich, and the whole be boiled for an hour, but so slow as that it may not burn; then let it cool and strain it off. The fish must be repacked in clean barrels, the last mentioned liquor put to them, and be careful that the fish be covered and kept close.

P. SLEAVIN.

*No. 7, Little Brook-Street, Hampstead Road,
April 6th, 1811.*